



# PRIDE UNBOUND

June 2023 / Issue 3 / Vol1

2023 HIGHLIGHTS

ECO-PRIDE

OUR STORIES

# CONTENTS

## PAGE 1

*INTRODUCTION*

## PAGE 2

*QUEER ECO-JUSTICE*

## PAGE 7

*COMMUNITY STORIES*

## PAGE 20

*COMMUNITY PHOTOS*

## PAGE 42

*IN LOVING MEMORY*



# MISSION HILLS COMMUNITY

Mission Hills is committed to creating radically inclusive spaces of belonging, healing, and wholeness. In this, we hope to make sure there is no question in what we mean by “all are welcome at the table.”

Mission Hills is an inclusive community that celebrates people of all gender identities, sexual orientations, religions, ethnicities, and economic statuses. Together, we seek to embody faith that loves God, embraces beauty, and lives life to the fullest.

This magazine contains sacred stories of our community, our understanding of our "why," and our commitment to eco-justice. While it contains many of the people who are part of our community, there are many more who are part of the Mission Hills family who have either been a part of previous pride magazines or are new. We recognize everyone as part of the community and strive to make sure that folks know that they are welcome and belong, regardless of how often they may come on a Sunday. Much gratitude to everyone for making this count!



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# QUEER ECO- JUSTICE

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# INTER- CONNECT -ED

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## queerness & eco-justice intertwined

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Queer and eco-liberation walk hand in hand. We have found that just as we are fighting for people of all genders and sexualities to be accepted and experience a safe and joyful existence, we simultaneously are fighting for climate justice to have a safe and joyful planet to live with.

Looking at LGBTQ+ history, one really important truth to hold is that we have always existed. Existence is resistance. It's important in this moment that people understand that they can be who they are, even as crises continue.

It is important to remember that rest is also resistance. When we do have the energy and capacity to participate in climate care, we do so holding hope that we will provide sustainable space for future generations of people to thrive while always honoring earth not as something to dominate, but to be in relationship together.

We are committed, in a world governed by the presumption of heterosexual expression, to challenge homophobia, to celebrate lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and other individuals within the spectrum of human sex and sexuality, and to develop leadership to encourage faith communities to become more open and affirming. We are committed, on a fragile planet threatened by pollution and exploitation, to interrogate ecological policies, theologies, and practices, and to challenge materialism and the devaluation of creation.

Mission Hills has two dedicated months in its liturgical calendar to lift up a sermon series dedicated to each of its primary values: LGBTQ inclusion in June and environmental justice in September.

“

We value inclusive and affirming faith, not confining and judgmental.

We value belonging and community, not church consumption or attendance.

We value compassion, leading us to justice and healing.

We value doubts and questions as essential to faith, not in opposition to faith.

We value finding beauty in creative arts, nature, and mystery.

We value contemplation, wisdom, and curiosity above belief and doctrine.

We value serving people and our planet because through love we experience Christ.

We value a radical embrace of the Christian wisdom tradition and the pursuit of authentic spirituality for a post-Christian

future.

”

# Mission Hills LA



1. garden day
2. pride sunday
3. labyrinth build
4. art gallery hallway
5. sunset hike
6. justice decal
7. SFV Pride
8. thai temple outing
9. guest speaker Paul Mugane

# snapshots from the garden





# Dorothy & Zach

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Dorothy (she/her) and Zach (they/them), greysexual and non-binary respectively, been coming to MH since fall 2022.



## **What does pride mean to you?**

This year is the second Pride that we are celebrating since discovering Zach's gender identity, and Dorothy's first with a queer identity for herself. We grew up the furthest thing from affirming, and didn't have access to the education that helped identify these things in ourselves until the past few years. Discovering and embracing our queerness is not only exciting personally, but is a special re-brand for us as a couple. Since embracing queer inclusivity in our faith, the most beautiful thing for me (Dorothy) has been the resounding "Yes!" that the Spirit has whispered in response to the question I think I'd been trying to ask since I was a little girl: "Could God ACTUALLY be that loving and that expansive?" Being at Mission Hills has felt a bit like rolling down your windows as you approach the coastline- fresh salt air, a gentle breeze, and a deep inner peace. We are thankful for the space to bring our whole selves along with our emotions, doubts, and fears, and to safely admit that we don't really know what TF we're doing, either <3

## **What prayer requests do you have for the community?**

We haven't really come out to our unaffirming families yet, but personally feel like the time has almost come to rip the band-aid off. We appreciate your prayer and love in the coming months as we navigate these conversations and learn to re-parent ourselves through C-PTSD.

“

Chris Kinnett

He/Him

Two-Spirit Trans Man

Member of MHCC



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**What does pride mean to you?**

I'm going to be very honest with this and share that I actually hated pride I didn't understand why the LGBTQ+ community felt the need to create such large public displays that to me made not only the community but myself being a part of it a target for such vile, hate-filled people. I blamed my own community for the actions of a group that had no space in their heart for someone like me. I wanted people just like me to make themselves smaller in order for it to be a "safer" world for us. It wasn't until I learned the true history of pride as well as about Marsha P. Johnson did I realize that people like myself and others that are part of the LGBTQ+ didn't owe anyone silence. The meaning of pride has changed for me and it is something I am now extremely grateful for and truly understand the importance of for those in this community. We need spaces to come together to create, share and receive love for our self-expression.

I think the thing that makes pride even more special for me this year is I have found a beautiful community within Mission Hills Christian Church and was able to reclaim my relationship with God that felt stripped away by other "Christians" who feel the need to dictate others' lives based on their interpretation of the Bible. I have always stayed connected with God with or without church but there is nothing better than worshipping as a collective and feeling the presence of the Creator surround yourself and people you love.

**What prayer requests and/or life updates would you like to share with the community?**

Right now I'd like to ask for prayers in regards to my next step in life, to ask for God's help guiding me on what path I should be taking.



# Rae Stewart

I'm Rae Stewart, they/them/any pronouns. I'm a queer person who has been a part of the Mission Hills community for a little over a year now.

## **What does pride mean to you?**

For me, pride means not being ashamed of who you are. For years I struggled through shame and guilt, believing God hated me for being queer because of my strict conservative upbringing. My life changed when I learned and truly started to believe that God is love and only love. The hatred I was experiencing wasn't from God but from myself and through a greater connection with the Divine I learned to stop hating myself for who I am and be proud of who They made me to be. Pride is self-love with no room for shame.

## **What prayer requests do you have?**

This year I started my career as an ASL Interpreter! It's gone very well so far and I've been blessed to have the opportunity to work with lots of amazing people in many different places. I love what I do with all of my heart but it can also be very stressful and overwhelming starting a career so I would appreciate prayer for peace in navigating that.

# Ty Tutak



happy graduation Ty!  
Thank you for all of your service and commitment to Mission Hills.



## GÉNESIS SARAÍ NOCHEZ (SHE/THEY)

**What does pride mean to you?**

True pride, personally, is found in how I interact with the world around me in the most honorable way and come back knowing i've made the best choices with the world around me.

**What prayer requests do you have?**

Please keep my mother and grandmothers in prayers as they continue though the difficulties they face.



THE ARMBRUSTER'S



# Laura Selwyn

(She/Her) Long time member and board chair



## What does pride mean to you?

Pride to me is a feeling of satisfaction one has about an accomplishment or asset, either of their own or a community they have a vested interest in.

As applied to gender diversity, Pride is a sad state of affairs. The sense of 'normalcy' hetero folks take for granted about the sexual identity they were born with, often deny others to recognize their own inborn sexual identity. I doubt that heterosexuals feel 'Pride' over their gender identity. It simply is. That so many Christians see diversity in sexuality as a negative translates to me that they see it as a 'mistake' the Creator made, rather than an example of what we see everywhere in God's creation: like the bouquet of our sensory experiences, colors and textures in nature, the endless variety of ideas and solutions minds can create, different cultural expressions, etc. that we treasure, celebrate and enjoy. Why do some think God would in this one small area of creation limit the variety expressed so beautifully in every other area! The fact that one such variation allows for procreation of the species does not mean other variations are without purpose.



## Theresia & Priscilla Falter

*To us, pride means knowing you are loved and accepted for who you are, by your community and by God.*

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# Xochitl Alvizo

she/her, queer,  
latina, lesbian, and  
an irregular  
participant of  
Mission Hills, but  
I'm proud of this, my  
church!

## What does pride mean to you?

Pride is the explicit and intentional celebration of all people, in all their fabulousness.

# DAVE & MORGAN HANSOW

**What does pride mean to you?**

Being accepted in any community where you don't have to hide parts of yourself, is exactly the type of love that God has for the world, and is the type of community that we all crave. For that reason, we're proud to be in a community where anyone; no matter their social status, income levels, gender or race can feel welcome.





## Barbara, Amanda, & Magnolia Reguengo

Amanda Reguengo, she/her/hers, member since 2018

### **What does pride mean to you?**

To me, pride means being your true, authentic self despite what anyone or any institution says. Living your best life as you. Coming out wasn't easy, but when I did, I felt free to finally be who I was. I didn't have to hide anymore. To be honest, I have to come out everyday because I don't "look" gay, but I am happy to because each time I feel like I am breaking down that stereotype of what it "looks like" to be gay. Being part of an affirming church allowed me to renew my faith. It allowed me to not feel bad about who I was, because the God who created me, created me perfectly. I am made exactly as was intended and MHCC affirms that. This community loves me for me. They show up for me and support me and my family in ways I never knew possible. I feel so lucky and blessed to be a part of it.

### **What prayer requests do you have?**

My wife and I recently had a baby girl after 5 years of trying! Her name is Magnolia Reign and she is everything we dreamed of and more. MHCC has been there through the good, the bad and the ugly and we are so blessed to be able to celebrate her with this community, who we consider our extended family. My only prayer request would be that God continues to watch over us and her as we navigate this adventure of motherhood.

# How do we bloom if not together?

...the ground or stays  
...iverse is vast, and you  
...s also beautiful. You  
...something bigger t  
...t of something t  
...most of your tim  
...e a blog post. M



...strongly believe  
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...men, you'll become  
...ore to learn. My  
...own instruction f

# Deconstructing Our Values

Mission Hills is committed to being a pro-reconciling/anti-racist church.

Christ calls us to dismantle white supremacy and systemic racism and advocate for justice in our community and world. As a community, we are committed to pursuing anti-racism not as an option but as an essential. We are committed to supporting anti-racism work in our own community, families, and as part of the greater Los Angeles area. We commit to acting justly within our structure, policies, and activism involvement. We recognize that stepping into brave space means that sometimes we will misstep, but we continue to push forward in creating spaces for true belonging.



# baptism sunday



# DIA DE LOS MUERTOS

Dia de los Muertos/Day of the Dead is a holiday celebrated mostly in central and southern Mexico during the days of November 1 & 2. This also coincides with the Catholic holiday called All Soul's & All Saint's Day. Indigenous folks have combined this with their own ancient beliefs of honoring their deceased loved ones. For the last two years, we have created a community ofrenda to honor this celebration and those we love who have passed on.

On Dia de los Muertos, we are creating physical, tangible space for that which makes us human. Death is something that affects each and every one of us. The grief that comes after can be vastly different, depending on the relationship you had with the person that died, whether you've experienced it in the past, etc. How beautiful it is that this practice pushes back against a grief-avoidant culture that seeks our attention at all times. We are carving out time to remember, to sit, to reflect, to not shy away from that which is sometimes painful, sometimes beautiful, and sometimes a mix of everything in between.

To "re-member" is not just a matter of the mind hitting a recall button. To "re-member" is to gain back that which belongs organically to oneself. It is a matter of identity, a recovering of something that is essentially a part of one's story.



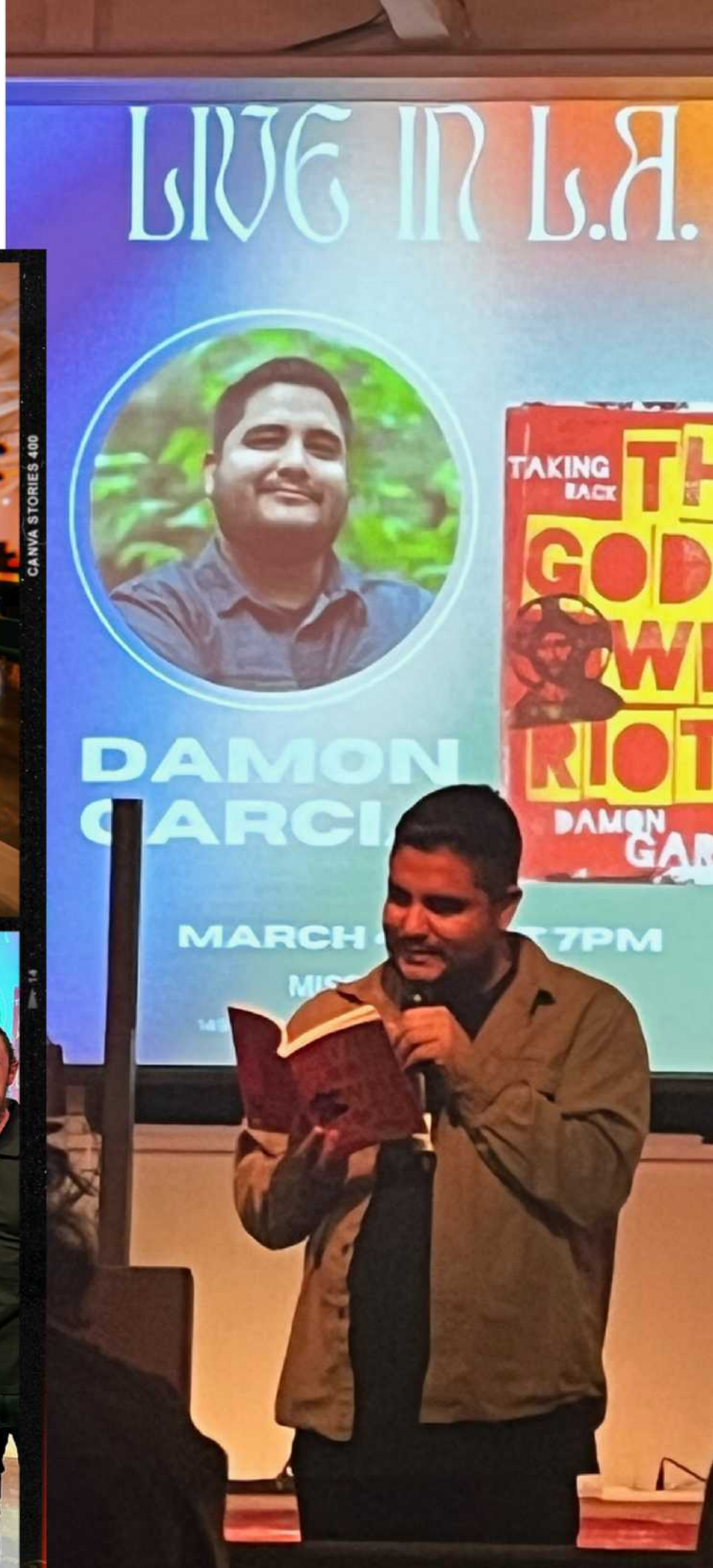
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# DAMON GARCIA @ MHCC



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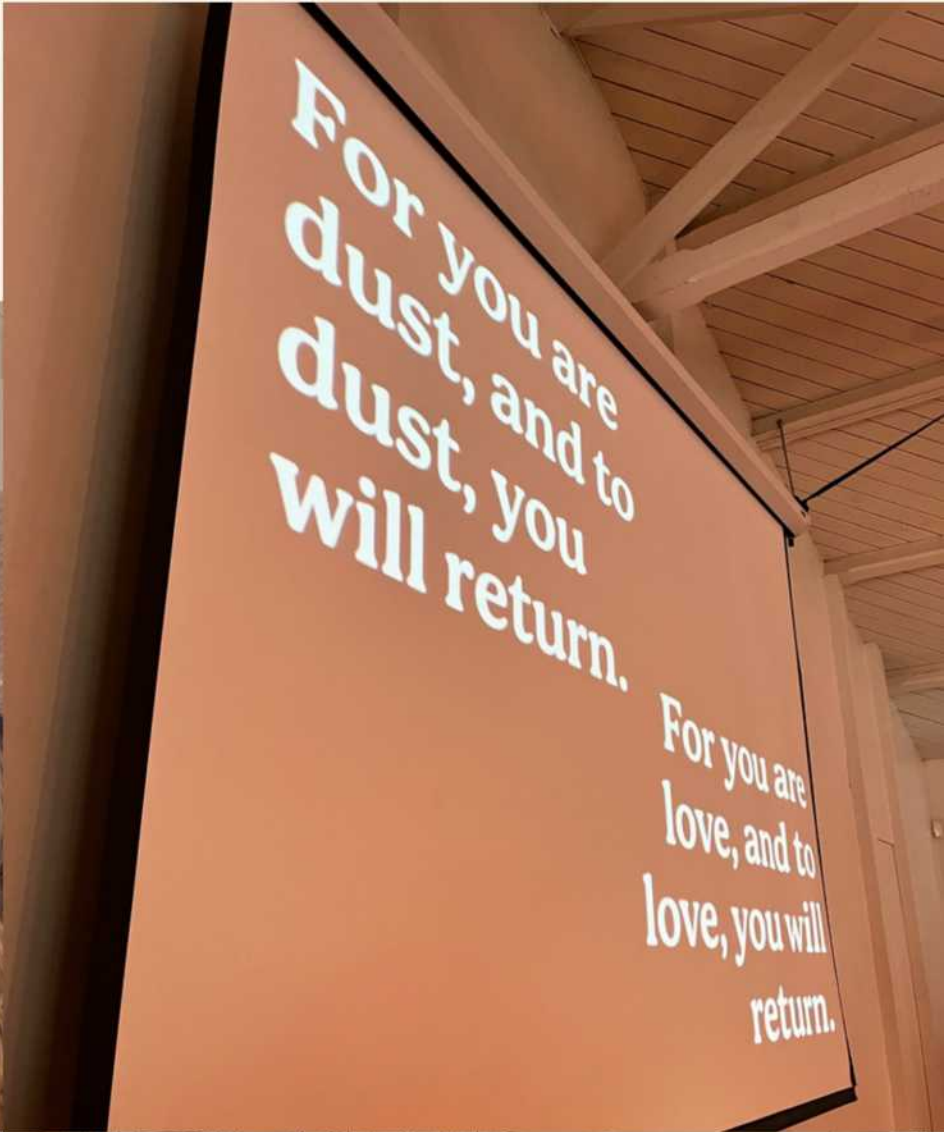
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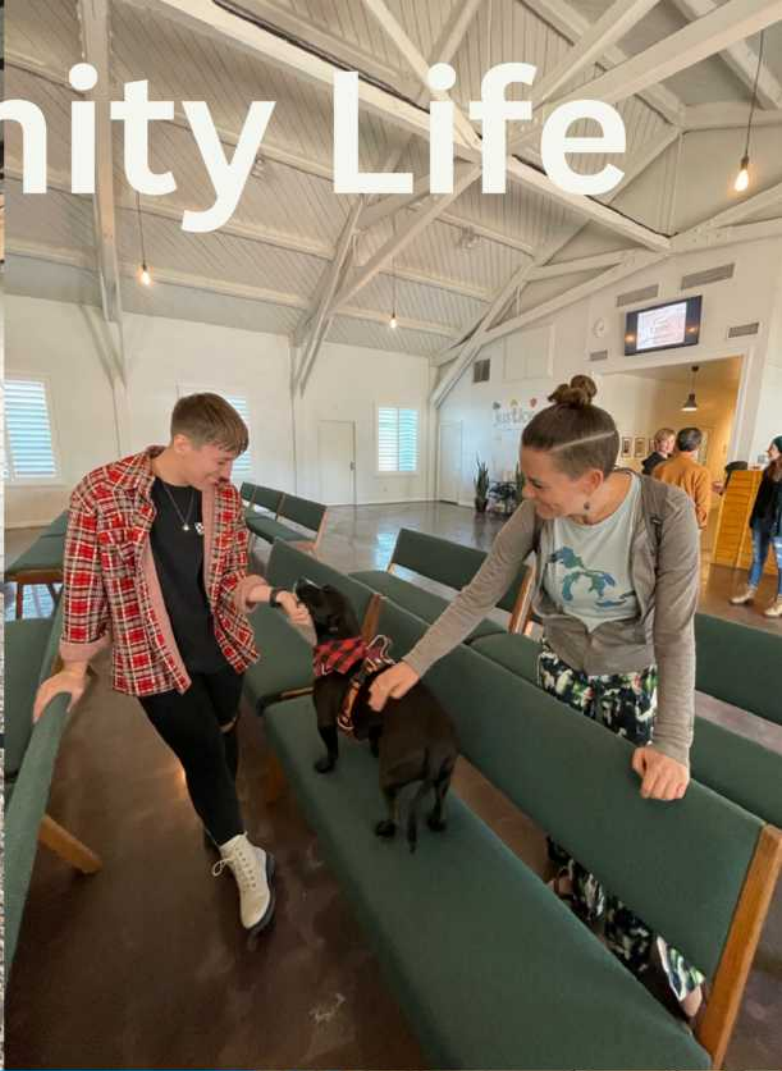
# Ash Sunday



# gigi fit 5k



# Community Life











# REPRESENTING

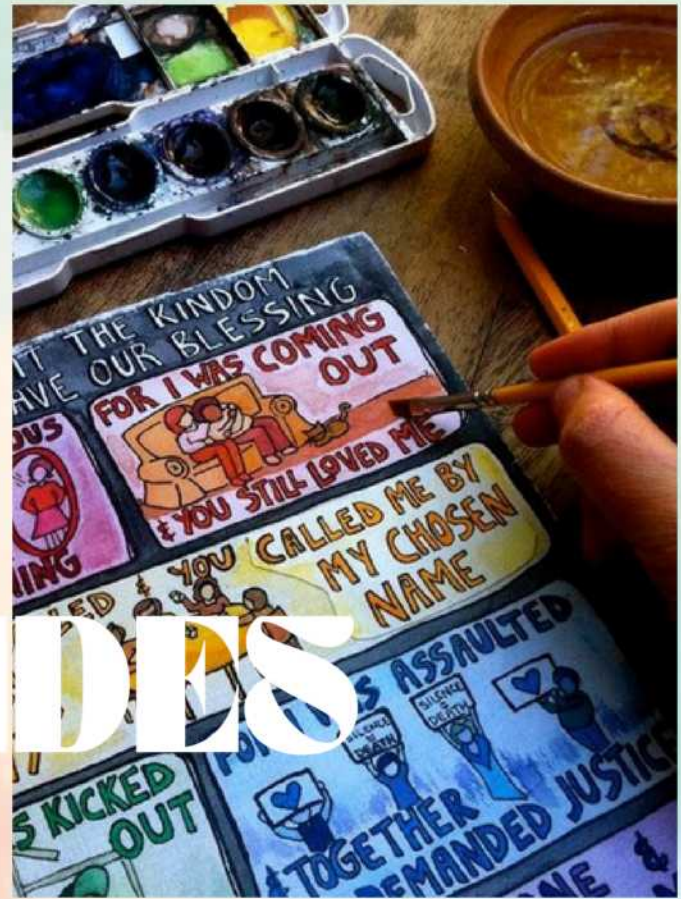


# THE SPECTRUM

# QUEER BEAUFULNES

By Jay Hulme

Blessed are the outcasts;  
the ostracised, the outsiders.  
Blessed are the scared;  
the scarred, the silent.  
Blessed are the broken;  
for they are not broken.  
Blessed are the hated;  
for they are not worthy of hate.  
Blessed are those who try;  
those who transform, who transition.  
Blessed are the closeted;  
God sees you shine anyway.  
Blessed are the queers;  
who love creation enough to live the truth of it,  
despite a world that tells them they cannot.  
And blessed are those  
who believe themselves unworthy of blessing;  
what inconceivable wonders you hold.



Art by Annemarie Barrett

# RYAN, ANDREA & ELLIE



## What does pride mean to you?

Pride is celebrating life in all of its fullness! We are so grateful to be a part of a community that embodies the expansive love of the divine here and now.

## What prayer requests do you have?

For our sister Jess and her chemo treatment <3







### What does pride mean to you?

Pride is embracing the fullness of one's self, dreams, identity, possibilities, and love. It takes on different forms and is important to find a way to be present to pride individually and communally. It is to honor the legacy of the LGBTQIA+ folks who came before us and fought for civil rights, and to hold and share their stories so they may be re-membered.

My coming out journey has been three-fold and continues to evolve. I am journeying with gender, my bisexuality, and constantly trying to embrace myself and continue to love and serve my community. I am so grateful to Mission Hills for being my home, my chosen family, and a place where I truly belong.



**KELLY &  
KUZCO**

**isn't it lovely  
to know**

**your queerness  
is divine**



Divine Non-Binary  
by Samantha Houser

God of the divine feminine, help me strip away all that the world requires of me. The smallness, the daintiness, the gentle and submissive tendencies, the beauty standards, the trendiness, the fashion conscientiousness, the norms of cooking and cleaning and care taking. The expectations of lady-like demeanor.

And instead, equip me with all that I see in you. Remind me of the ways in which I embody intuitiveness, compassion, wisdom, acceptance, forgiveness, collaboration, and reflectiveness.

God of the divine masculine, help me to strip away all that the world requires of me. The greatness, the supremacy, the righteous anger, the norms of being the sole protector and the key provider. The expectations of becoming the one and the only.

And instead, equip me with all that I see in you. Remind me of the ways in which I embody logic, assertiveness, discipline, boundaries, confidence, and objectivity.

God of the divine nonbinary, help me strip away the notion of the either/or. The archetypes and the paradigms that divide. The expectations that I must fit into a single category.

And instead, equip me with all that I see in you. Remind me of the ways in which I embody expansiveness, liminal space, inclusiveness.

Help me to trust these qualities, to know them as holy and sacred and worthy.

Amen.

# HAPPY



“Love him and let him love you. Do you think anything else under heaven really matters?” – James Baldwin

“If I wait for someone else to validate my existence, it will mean that I’m shortchanging myself.” – Zanele Muholi

“We need, in every community, a group of angelic troublemakers.” – Bayard Rustin

“The richness, beauty and depths of love can only be fully experienced in a climate of complete openness, honesty and vulnerability.” – Anthony Venn Brown



# PRIDE





# pride 2022





Hayward  
@nakedpastor.com



@nakedpastor.com

At Mission Hills, we truly value the power of art and the use of imagery to communicate our values. One of the several artists we deeply value goes by the great name of "Naked Pastor." David Hayward, the artist, has journeyed through deconstruction by creating these simple but deeply moving images that communicate an open and expansive understanding of the Divine, often specifically pushing back against the hateful messaging of conservative Christianity. We believe that we cannot liberate one without the liberation of all, and we find that this image, along with others of David's creations, communicate this well.



*Our bonus mom, fierce and loyal advocate of the LGBTQ+ community, amazing mother and grandmother, joyful presence and incredible force of love*

*In loving memory of  
Kerrie Clark*



Thank you

Thank you.

For being part of a community that cares. For relentlessly loving in the midst of it all. For being there for each other. For sending meals, letters and packages, and bad internet memes.

Thank you.

Thank you.

For supporting this space. For setting The Table every week for all people. For standing alongside those who are marginalized, oppressed, excluded, and ignored in our communities and churches. For loving our planet and life in ever-deepening ways.

Thank you.

Thank you.

For reading books together, listening to each other's stories, and wandering through nature together. For playing music together, deconstructing faith together, and reimagining a more inclusive and expansive spirituality.

Thank you.

Thank you.

For being you. Needing nothing to prove, nothing to do, and nothing to fix. For being more than enough. For being beloved.

Thank you.



**LOVE GOD.  
EMBRACE BEAUTY.  
LIVE LIFE TO THE FULLEST.  
AMEN.**



**MISSION HILLS**

Issue No. 3 | June 2023

MISSION HILLS MAGAZINE

# PRIDE UNBOUND

## Community

*Connect with updates from  
our community!*

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## Eco-Justice

*Learn about the  
intersection of queer and eco-justice*

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## Encouragement

*Find reminders to uplift you during this  
pride month*

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